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ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of a study that examined the formation and development of a coalition of business leaders and its impact on state education policy. The coalition, called the Corporations for the Improvement of Educational Quality (CIEQ), was developed in a large midwestern state. The paper uses and assesses the efficacy of five interest group theories: Truman's (1951) order and disturbance theory, Olson's (1965) byproduct theory; Salisbury's (1969) exchange theory; Sabatier's (1992) commitment theory; and MacFarland's (1987, 1992) countervailing power theory. The study asked the following research questions: (1) How and why has this group of business leaders joined together to form CIEQ? (2) How did CIEQ select and get its agenda? (3) How has CIEQ maintained and supplemented its membership and agenda? and (4) Who has benefitted from the efforts of CIEQ and what benefits did they receive? Data were obtained through participant observation, document analysis, and interviews with 28 key members, 8 state legislators, and 12 other individuals involved in state education policy. The study found limited support for each of the five theories, but found particularly strong support for order and disturbance, commitment, and countervailing power theories. Individuals joined, set their agenda, and maintained their membership through a combination of interests and needs. Such actions are contingent upon a number of issues--the presence of a significant societal disturbance, a strong personal interest in a specific issues, and participants' recognition that their voices are absent from the current debate. One table is included. (Contains 25 references.) (LMI)

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ORGANIZING BUSINESS LEADERS TO IMPACT THE DEMOCRATIC POLICY-MAKING PROCESS

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Background and Purpose

Stemming from the much publicized threat to American superiority in international business and trade (US Chamber of Commerce, 1982; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), President Bush's Education Summit with the Nation's governors in 1989, and the advent of the Business Roundtable's Ad Hoc Committee on Education, business joined government leaders and sounded a call for improved schools in the name of the nation's economic well-being (Business Roundtable, 1990, 1991, 1992). Since that time, the political role of business in influencing education policy has stirred much debate, controversy and skepticism (Kearns and Doyle, 1988; Kozol, 1991; Ray and Mickelson, 1990). In a democratic society, the study of political organizations and processes, and more specifically interest groups, is motivated by the need to understand the necessary development of complex political arrangements to govern a complex civilization (Truman, 1951). Intricate patterns of political behavior within such organizations make up the core of what this case study investigates and describes.

Responding to the decree from the Business Roundtable (BRT) and similar to efforts in many other states across the country, several corporations in a large mid-western state joined together with the goal of influencing the education policy-making process. Originally comprised of six chief executive officers (CEOs) from the largest corporations in the state, and later growing to as many as twelve, this coalition of powerful business leaders, named the Corporations for the Improvement of Educational Quality (CIEQ; a pseudonym), embarked on a ten year commitment to improve public schooling in their state. Since its inception, CIEQ has set an agenda for action, maintained and added to its membership, and became active in the state policy arena. The purpose of this study is to examine the formation and development of this coalition of business leaders and its impact on the development of state education policy. In addition, we use and assess the efficacy of five well established interest group theories: order and disturbance, by-product, exchange, commitment, and countervailing power, using a modified version of Sabatier's framework (1992, p. 111).

Conceptual Perspective

In finding theory to inform and guide our study, we turn to the literature on a specific type of organization: interest groups. Conceptualizations of interest groups are an outgrowth of organization theory; the key difference being the addition of an overt (and sometimes covert) mission to influence decisions external to the organization. In Truman's (1951) classic study he defined interest groups as "any group that, on the basis of one or more shared attitudes, makes certain claims upon other groups in the society for the establishment, maintenance, or enhancement of forms of behavior that are implied by the shared attitudes" (p. 33). This definition is narrow because it assumes a congruence of beliefs and goals among members of an interest group. In this study, our empirical questions test Truman's assumption (and thus his definition) and so his definition is not applicable or desirable for our purposes. Hence, for the present study we use a broader definition proposed by Thomas and Hrebenar (1992): "[An interest group is] any association of individuals, whether formally organized or not, that attempts to influence public policy" (p. 153). This definition makes fewer assumptions regarding interest groups, their memberships, and their ideologies. CIEQ, with its stated mission of becoming a "catalyst" for the influence of state educational policy, clearly falls under the guise of an interest group, without relying on empirically untested assumptions. We also point out to the reader that despite some popular conceptions that interest groups are a negative influence on the policy making process, for example, causing gridlock or giving unfair advantages to some (e.g., Lowi, 1979), we agree with

Petracca (1992) and Walker (1991) who do not generically judge interest groups to be either a negative or positive influence, but simply an important influence in the policy making process, worthy of study and attention.

Five Theories

Five theories are used to inform and interpret the formation, agenda setting, maintenance, and benefit of CIEQ: Truman's (1951) order and disturbance, Olson's (1965) by-product, Salisbury's (1969) exchange, Sabatier's (1992) commitment, and McFarland's (1987, 1992) countervailing power. While these theories are not mutually exclusive with regard to the motivations of individuals to form and join groups, make group decisions, maintain membership, and distinguish benefits and beneficiaries, each theory offers substantive and differing perspectives on interests groups and is widely used in the literature. Likewise, the four guiding questions in this study are fundamental to any interest group and are consistently addressed within the various theories.

The relationships between the questions and theories form the centerpiece of this study, are reciprocal in nature, and are summarized in Table 1. Each theory speaks to each question, and each question is in search of theory for its answer. Here, we offer a brief discussion of the five theoretical perspectives in light of our four central questions about interest group formation, agenda setting, maintenance, and benefits.

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Order and Disturbance Theory

For nearly two decades, the work of Truman (1951) formed the basis for the study of interest groups. He believed that humans are naturally social beings and that individuals with common interests naturally gravitate to form organizations.

Formation. Truman (1951) theorized that humans, at their most basic level, are group oriented and groups arise out of the "natural interaction" of people with similar beliefs and interests. Therefore, a variety of groups will form around the various sides of an issue, creating a naturally balanced and pluralistic approach to policy influence and policy making. Interest group formation is particularly prevalent when societal disturbances threaten the issues of concern to a group of individuals. In short, Truman believed the formation of interest groups to be an expected and common phenomenon in society. As group membership increases, necessitating a formal administrative structure, procedures are developed for decisionmaking processes, consensus building, and action.

Agenda setting. The process by which groups set their agenda, while not without conflict, stems from discussion and prioritization of goals and ideals of the majority of the group membership. Should an individual's ideals differ significantly from the group's agenda, the individual would naturally give up their membership and likely look for another group whose goals more closely align with their own. However, individual groups are far from being homogenous and singular in thought, particularly the larger groups. As such, Truman spoke to the importance of group leadership in keeping the membership intact, quelling infighting, and leading the agenda setting. Truman assumed the views of the leaders to be necessarily similar to that of the rank and file membership and so reaching consensus among leaders and members is not unduly difficult.

Maintenance. Like the genesis of formal interest organizations, Truman hypothesized that maintaining group membership is also predicated on the fundamental belief that individuals will remain organized as long as their issue of concern is addressed, or as long as the issue exists. In addition, continued presence of an external threat to the group's ideals serves to strengthen the resolve of individuals and serves to maintain group membership.

Benefits. Truman views purposive collective action with ensuing collective benefits as the natural outcome of interest group activity. He does not believe direct and tangible rewards for individuals to be necessary for continued membership, as it is the commonality of the goal that leads persons to join and maintain their membership. Progressing toward the group's cause (and thus the individual's cause) is sufficient benefit for individuals, and does not work against the true beneficiary: the society at-large.

By-Product Theory

The second theory guiding this study of interest groups is Olson's (1965) by-product theory. In direct contrast to Truman, Olson posits that individuals primarily act rationally on behalf of their own interests to maximize their own well-being. Consequently, persons act on behalf of group goals and policies only to the extent that their personal goals are satisfied. In other words, external group goals are realized only as a by-product of the maximization of individual self interest. Given these assumptions about individual membership decisions, Olson believed the formation of interest groups (particularly large groups) to be troublesome and not rational

Formation. In relying on this perspective to understand and predict individual behavior, Olson states that it is not rational for individuals to join most interest groups, as the collective benefits are as likely to accrue to non-members as they are to members of the organization. This is especially true for large groups with many members. Given the cost, however small, to join an organization, individuals conduct benefit-cost analyses which sanction their decision of whether or not to join. Should the perceived costs be greater than the expected benefit, individuals will likely choose not to join, particularly if the group's actions collectively benefit all or a portion of society beyond the interest group. Olson labels this the "free-rider problem," in which non-members reap the collective benefits of interest groups without paying dues or exerting effort on behalf of the organizations. Olson's view of personal behavior and motivation begs the fundamental question: How do groups providing collective benefits entice individuals to become members? Olson responds that groups must either provide sufficient selective benefits to members (benefits to which only members are entitled), or resort to coercion (e.g. closed shop policies and practices). Hence, group leaders must weigh the costs of attracting new members with the costs of sustaining their own interests and the interests of the group. Additionally, individuals rarely join for purely political reasons (e.g., social/political causes) but will join for reasons of personal economic utility (e.g., discounted insurance rates) or for some combination of economic and political motivations (Moe, 1980).

Agenda setting. The agenda setting of interest groups is also posited by Olson to be directly driven by the need to maximize individual interests and benefits. The formation of purposive group goals advocating collective benefit is only a potential by-product of the personal utility maximization of group members. Group leaders must ensure that they provide sufficient selective benefit for all members, and only thereafter can the leaders establish an agenda for broad collective benefit. The setting of the external agenda takes place to satisfy those individuals who joined in part for political motivations ("politically important" members; Moe, 1980) with little concern for members who joined for purely personal economic reasons. Such "economic members" typically have little interest in the political (purposive) issues and, in the eyes of the group leadership, possess no leverage with which to influence the political agenda of the group. Politically interested members may leave the group should the agenda not satisfy their interests, while economic members have no such lever because they are only interested in receiving the economic benefits of

the group membership. Should economic members leave, they simply lose their own economic benefits. In short, it is this interaction between the leadership and the "politically important" members that sets the formal external political agenda. The internal agenda, created and maintained to ensure sufficient selective incentives in order to sustain membership is the responsibility of the leadership and critical to the maintenance of the group.

Maintenance. In by-product theory, the maintenance of group membership is contingent upon the provision of sufficient incentives (economic and sometimes political) to its members. That is, as long as the selective incentives are adequate to all members, and the collective benefit is adequate to the political members, Olson theorizes that individuals will continue their membership. In other words, all individuals will remain members as long as their personal economic needs are satisfied, with the exception of those individuals who joined in part for political motivations. These politically motivated members will maintain membership only if their economic *and* political interests are met.

Benefit. As stated above, any external benefit derived from interest group activity exists only to the extent that the group membership benefits. As the leadership satisfies the needs of their economic members, these individuals will maintain their membership (and dues!) which in turn supports the external political agenda shaped by the politically-interested members. The external benefits, whether to a selective group (e.g., business community) or to the larger society, are solely dependent on the agenda and inclination of the group's interests.

Exchange Theory

Discussion of interest groups must include Salisbury's (1969) landmark essay on the exchange theory of interest groups. Salisbury agrees with Olson's (1965) fundamental assumption that humans are rational and engage in effort (costs) only to the degree that it is advantageous to their personal well-being. However, Salisbury goes a step further to address why certain people exert great effort and personal cost in forming a group. He believes that some individuals form interest groups so that they can then assume a leadership role in the organization. These "entrepreneurs" (Salisbury, 1969; Moe, 1980) exert great effort recruiting, structuring, and institutionalizing their groups so they may then reap the material and solidary benefits of such a leadership position (e.g., salary, fringe benefits, status). As described by Salisbury, these entrepreneurial actions are quite rational and self-serving. Furthermore, Salisbury argues that interest group activities are predominantly acts to maximize the self interest and utility of its members, and do not necessarily promote or improve external policy positions and actions. However, collective benefits are sometimes realized in exchange for the personal benefit of the group leaders and general membership. In other words the prime beneficiaries of interest groups are members, and not the polity external to the organization. However, in recent years the narrow scope of exchange theory has come into question in favor of a broader version (Moe, 1980; Sabatier, 1992). We use an expanded exchange perspective in our framework for this study.

Formation. An expanded view of exchange theory broadens some of the central tenets of Salisbury's narrow conceptualization (Sabatier, 1992). Proponents believe that exchange relationships between individuals and organizations may well also have a purpose, beyond the simple promotion of personal utility (well being) of each individual. More specifically, individuals may join and maintain membership in a group because of its purposive political goals. That is, if the proposed collective political benefit is sufficient and in agreement with their individual interests, individuals are apt to join. Similarly, the entrepreneur, so critical to the formation of the group, may also form the group on strictly collective, political grounds, with his/her own personal economic utility acting only as a secondary motivation.

Agenda Setting. In contrast to Salisbury's strict formulation in which the collective purpose agenda may be irrelevant to individual members goals, a recent formulation of exchange theory

views rank and file members interested and involved in the agenda setting process. The exchange relationship does not necessarily revolve around the personal economic gain by members, but may very well involve an exchange of effort and dues for a particular collective political purpose. This is not to say that personal utility maximization does not apply, but rather researchers must look carefully at what members are looking for in exchange for their efforts.

Maintenance. After forming their interest group, Salisbury (1969) posits that the main role of the leader is to ensure the continued flow of dues into the organization's coffers. Dues-paying members have typically been thought of as the life-blood of any interest group, and as such maintenance dominates the activity of the leader. Recent studies, however, have questioned the importance of dues-paying members. Oftentimes a minority of members pay nearly all of the group's operating costs, or they are funded entirely by government agencies or independent foundations (Walker, 1991). Having said this, group maintenance now looks very different from Salisbury's early perspective. To maintain group membership, group leaders must pay close attention to the political and collective interests of members and offer substantive progress toward the external goals in order to maintain a satisfied membership. However, as Moe (1980) points out, leaders must act in concert with the specifics of the group agenda. Should the group advocate a purposive policy or collective benefit, the maintenance enticements are quite different than if the group has an agenda of selective material benefits.

Benefits. Central to the formation, agenda setting, and maintenance functions of interest groups are the benefits which accrue to the membership and/or broader segments of society. Exchange theory postulates a broad array of possible benefits contingent upon the specific goals and function of each interest group. According to contemporary exchange theory, benefits may be limited to individual members, should that be the groups desire, or all of society may benefit should the group membership focus on collective action and benefits. In fact, the inclusive nature of expanded exchange theory is criticized for its attempt to cover and explain too many possibilities without benefit of a focused set of theoretical and falsifiable hypotheses (Sabatier, 1992).

Commitment Theory

Commitment theory is still in the process of development (Sabatier & McLaughlin, 1990). Its basic premise is that group organizers are more devoted or extreme than are typical individuals with regard to a particular issue. Hence the organizers have a greater propensity to form an interest group than most people (McCloskey, Hoffman, and O'Hara, 1960).

Formation. Strong conviction to a particular topic motivates individuals to engage in political action and exert the time, energy, and effort necessary to form an interest group. In addition, commitment theory posits that these few individuals believe so strongly in the issue that the supreme motivation is to realize collective benefits well beyond the benefit of the individual leaders. The recruitment of members beyond the highly committed few is difficult, but through enticements (benefits) a broader and more numerous membership can be attained. These enticements are not necessarily selective to group members, but are closely tied to the external goals of the group. Sabatier (1992) speaks of the "potential group" surrounding particular policy areas; a population of people who stand to benefit from the activities of the group. It is from this potential group, who likely have similar needs or interests, that leaders will seek additional members.

Agenda Setting. The agenda is clearly set by the highly committed leaders of the group. Others may join and attempt to influence the agenda of the leaders, although the issue areas are clearly laid out by the founders before membership becomes too large. Others will join based on the leaders stated goals and as such are unlikely to want to modify the stated goals.

Maintenance. The maintenance of interest groups, according to commitment theory, is predicated on the benefits offered to or accrued by the individual members. Clearly, the leadership is more highly committed to the cause than the rank and file membership and as such the leaders will typically remain in their positions as long as they continue to be interested in the cause or policy issue. To the extent that the leaders can persuade the membership that the cause is sufficiently important and the leaders can provide benefits (e.g., progress) to the membership, maintenance of the group will not be a problem. Should the leaders lose their conviction, or the rank and file members lose their interest, membership will likely dwindle.

Benefits. Benefits are likely collective and purposive to be enjoyed by the members and non-members alike. However, the theory does not preclude the offering of selective benefits to the members.

Countervailing Power

McFarland's (1992) theory of countervailing power developed in contrast to the work of Olson (1965, 1982) and Lowi (1969). In Olson and Lowi's conception of interest groups and the policy process, better-organized special interests gradually secure control over their particular realm of public policy, resulting in a policy standstill. With the work of Wilson (1973) and Walker (1982), however, theorists began to see the development and interaction of interest groups as more complex.

Formation. McFarland (1992), building on the work of Wilson (1973, 1980) and Walker (1991), argues that some groups are formed to provide "countervailing power to the special interest group that might otherwise dominate an area of policy" (p. 60). Often forming varied coalitions with public interest groups and professional associations, business interests enter the policy arena "to form countervailing coalitions to producer interests on specific policy issues" (p. 67). Individuals will form and join groups with the hope of filling a void in the policy debate.

Agenda-Setting. The agenda for coalitions providing countervailing power emerges from the common interests which brought the coalition together. Important to the formation of an agenda is the "issue network" which includes policy experts from the government, business, academia, and the media. Information about issues of common interest is shared through the issue network. McFarland argues that portions of the issue network may coalesce to form an interest group. Therefore, the agenda for such a groups is formed through the issue network and set in contrast to the prevailing agendas in the policy arena. Clearly, the agenda must be set apart from those advocated by the traditionally dominant groups.

Maintenance. Issue networks also help maintain interest groups (McFarland, 1992). Groups within issue networks "have a much easier time when it comes to organization and maintenance than do national voluntary groups funded by contributions from strangers unconnected to a network (McFarland, 1992, p. 77)." Communication becomes important in order to respond to the more powerful groups in a given policy area. We might conclude from McFarland's thesis that a group formed as a countervailing power will maintain itself as long as other interests need to be represented in the policy process. As long as the dominant voice excludes the views of the issue network, the interest group will remain active.

Benefits. Unlike Olson, McFarland does not consider selective benefits as the primary explanation for the formation of interest groups. He places selective benefits in a spectrum of variables which contribute to group formation. In a group drawn together to provide countervailing power, the benefits sought by group participants might take the form of specific policy goals, such as a group of businesses seeking deregulation of their industry or simply the satisfaction that the policy climate is more favorable to their interests.

Research Questions

The five theories and four central questions within this study about political interest groups are summarized in Table 1. The theories are set in columns across the top with the organizing questions down the left side of the table. Within each cell of the matrix are brief statements summarizing how the respective theories address each question. Our primary goal is to apply the five theories just described and shown in Table 1 to a study of a single interest group -- the CIEQ. Based on these five theories, four research questions guide our study:

1. How and why has this group of business leaders joined together to form CIEQ?

2. How did CIEQ select and set its agenda?

3. How has CIEQ maintained and supplemented its membership and agenda?

4. Who has been the beneficiary of the formation and effort of CIEQ, and what benefits have been derived?

To provide a context for responding to these questions, we first describe the background and history of both the BRT and CIEQ education initiatives.

Methods and Data Sources

The membership of the CIEQ presently consists of 11 corporations, the state chamber of commerce and a university. Since its inception, one original company has withdrawn along with and five have joined.

The data collection procedures for this study include participant observation, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews with central figures within and outside CIEQ. The participant observation includes an ongoing involvement of the authors with CIEQ in the form of education consultants for the business leaders. The consultation has been ongoing for six years (1990-present) and during this time has involved a number of individuals from the university. This involvement of the authors with CIEQ provides accessibility to people, documents and events. While some may argue that our involvement could be detrimental to conducting an unbiased study of the organization, we believe the access and trust we hold within the group provides us with a benefit far outweighing any negative methodological concerns.

We gathered documents from a variety of sources and catalogued them by topic and date. In this study, the documents were used to provide technical information such as dates and membership information to ensure accuracy.

The primary data source for this study is 48 semi-structured interviews with key members of the original and present day CIEQ organization in addition to select members of the policy-making arena (external to the CIEQ organization). The research team first identified a list of 51 potential participants based on past and present membership lists and knowledge of key policy participants and stakeholders involved in state policymaking over the last seven years. We then mailed an introductory letter to each of the identified individuals explaining the purpose of the study and asking for their participation in the form of an interview at the time and place of their convenience. Several days after the letters were sent, the researchers followed up with phone calls to confirm receipt of the letter and to inquire as to their willingness to participate. If the respondent agreed to participate in the interview, an appointment was set up and a list of interview questions and an informed consent statement was faxed to them. Both the original letter and the informed consent statement made clear that their responses would be tape recorded and guaranteed the respondent's confidentiality.

Specifically, we interviewed 15 original members of the CIEQ (five CEOs and ten working group members, including three from the university), 13 later joining members, eight state legislators involved in the education policy debate, and 12 other individuals involved in the education policy arena (e.g., advisors to the governor, leaders of state associations of teachers, administrators, and school boards, leaders of educational reform organizations, BRT leaders, and state department of education leaders).

We created two distinct yet overlapping interview schedules for the interviews. The first was used for all past and present members of CIEQ and the second for individuals external to CIEQ. Each schedule consisted of several questions asked to all participants as well as a number of probes to use contingent upon their responses to the structured questions. The interviews ranged from 10 to 60 minutes in duration, with the length largely dependent upon the familiarity of the individual with the history, operations, and influence of CIEQ. Thirty-two (69%) of 48 interviews were conducted over the phone, with 16 (33%) conducted in person. All but one of the interviews were recorded on audio tape and then transcribed. One respondent refused to be tape recorded. To maintain confidentiality, each transcript was assigned a random identification number and each organization assigned a random letter code.

To code the transcripts, we created coding sheets based on the categories in Table 1. The unit of analysis for this study is not the individual participant but rather individual thoughts and phrases. Hence, each respondent had items coded for one or more of the five theories used in this study for each of the four central questions. All appropriate items were coded first by which of the four questions they addressed and then by which of the five theories (if any) they supported. The coding was first conducted by two researchers and then triangulated by a third to ensure an acceptable degree of inter-rater reliability. In the findings section when we make specific reference to a quotation made by an interviewee, we report the confidential identification number in place of the respondent's name. All references to respondents organizations are removed to maintain confidentiality.

Findings

Before the formal theoretical analysis of our case study, we include a brief section on the formation of the BRT and CIEQ. The intent of this section is to place this study in the context of the education policy debate of the late 1980's and 1990's.

History

Background of BRT involvement in education policy: Business involvement in local, state, and federal policymaking is not new; in fact, students of public policy find it difficult to ignore the influence of business in nearly all aspects of public policy. But questions of how and why businesses unite to influence policy continue to plague political scientists, or as Plotke (1992, p. 178) states, "the reality of business mobilization...is not in question; the problem is how to explain it." Plotke argues against a rationalistic economic explanation ("natural economic logic"; p. 182) for increased business involvement in favor of a political view in which business makes a series of political judgments about economic choices in trying to improve the general climate for business.

The BRT, a coalition of more than 200 of the nation's largest corporations, became a powerful influence during the 1970's and 1980's with regard to myriad of policy issues ranging from taxes to the environment to health-care to education (Plotke, 1992). In describing how the BRT emerged as a major political player in educational reform, we pay careful attention to Plotke's thesis. The popular (neo-classical, neo-Marxist) explanations for the formation and expansion of the BRT view member and potential member BRT firms engaging in purely rational, economic decisions in choosing whether to involve themselves, either individually or in a coalition with other firms, in the political games of policy making. Such decisions would be based on individual corporate

needs and profits as they attempt to maximize the utility of their political actions. However, as Plotke points out, this line of reasoning does not help to explain collective activity of businesses (large or small) in a policy issue such as education. With some overlap, most firms have different needs with regard to (de)regulation, tax law, personnel issues, etc., and as such the formation of alliances among business elite's is quite improbable.

Plotke speaks of the needs and interests of business in a scale much broader than the neo-classicist or neo-Marxist. He describes "general" and "overall" business contexts and perspectives "rather than the aggregation of immediate business experiences" as the carrot for collective action (p. 188). He posits that a "good national business climate" is what motivates the formation organizations such as the BRT as well as the subsequent and ensuing collective action of its members. Forsaking the immediate corporate interests for the medium and long term rewards and consequences of a positive business climate makes potential members into members, and turns a collection of firms into a powerful political force.

A better understanding of why and how the BRT became involved in educational issues and policies is informed by Plotke's discussion. Had each CEO and his corporation focused only on their own corporate needs (e.g., their specific hiring, training, personnel, and bottom line issues), then agreement on a set of educational reform issues would be nearly impossible. However, with the goal of a better educational system providing medium and long term benefits for business, the specific reform issues became more fundamental and common. Agreeing upon these educational policy issues became more feasible and probable. It is through these motivations that the BRT members agreed upon and established their 9 essential components of a successful education system (Business Roundtable, 1990). While some may argue that the only goal of business is to increase its profit margin, a careful look at the nine essential components of the BRT initiative reveal broad based issues and concerns far too general to be construed as aiming to improve a CEO's bottom line.

Background on Formation of CIEQ

In 1989, the BRT formed an education task force to study what role business should play in reforming the Nation's public educational system. This formation came on the heels and the request of President Bush and his first of its kind "Education Summit" with the Nation's governors. This combination of events marked the reintroduction of education reform on the national policy agenda. Together, these events signaled a call to arms in the fight to stem the "rising tide of mediocrity" in our schools and to quell the threat to American superiority in manufacturing and trade (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

John Akers [CEO of IBM] decided along with two other BRT leaders that they should become "serious" about education reform. They viewed education as a "white hat" issue, different from the typical business interests (e.g., taxes, health-care, environment), which have clear and immediate stakes for business. A respondent knowledgeable with the BRT discussed the interest of the BRT leaders in 1989:

> ...education was both an issue which they rose above their peripheral interests and where...many of the very enlightened business leaders saw that this...went *far beyond the peripheral interest of the day*, but dealt with some of the *fundamental issues of our democracy*...How are you going sustain an economic system..., both democratic and capitalistic, unless you have a well educated populous? 486 (emphasis added)

As the business leaders convened, in response to the President's appeal, to lay a course for broad, national education policy activity, the BRT reasoned that the influence of its member corporations is better served at the state, rather than national level. Subsequently, each member corporation's CEO was asked to "adopt" a state in which s/he would focus their efforts on education reform.

Across the nation, the BRT recommended that CEOs form coalitions among business leaders, governors, and other state leaders. The BRT also "challenged" the CEOs to make a ten year commitment towards implementation of the nine "essential components" outlined by the BRT. More specifically, the BRT advised each state-level coalition of CEOs to pursue a comprehensive reform agenda by comparing their state's educational system to the BRT's nine essential components; develop recommendations and propose strategies to close the gap between the nine points and the state's present practices; generate public support with "strong" public communications programs; and finally, introduce and pass "comprehensive legislation" ensuring implementation of each of the nine essential components (Business Roundtable, 1991). In short, the BRT provided a cogent mandate to jump start each state coalition of business leaders and a road-map to guide the process.

To ensure adequate leadership for each state group, the Chairman of the BRT Education Task Force, John Akers, personally asked, told, or sought a CEO to volunteer from each state to chair the state level coalitions of CEOs. In this midwestern state, the chosen leader accepted responsibility for the state effort and convened the other BRT CEOs, all seven of whom committed to the ten year mission and formed the CIEQ. This group of seven CEOs agreed to meet twice a year and to appoint corporate representatives to a working group. The working group, charged with conducting the day-to-day activities of CIEQ and informing their CEO as to the status and progress of CIEQ, met monthly. The make-up of the working group representatives varied as several high ranking appointees were given decisionmaking and voting authority for their company (generally vice-president level), while other lower level participants needed to receive authorization for each and every CIEQ decision and policy from their superiors.

In addition to the seven member BRT corporations, the state Chamber of Commerce joined CIEQ. The state Chamber was asked to join CIEQ at its inception to provide some bureaucratic structure and serve as a valuable bridge to other business leaders throughout the state as well as the governor's office. After nearly a year of self-directed leadership, CIEQ contracted with a university to help guide policy positions and decisions. Today, seven years after its inception, CIEQ has a hired a director, added to its membership, produced several reports, hosted conferences, and actively worked toward policy change and implementation at both the state and local level.

By any measure, CIEQ is small with its largest membership reaching a peak of 13 organizations with roughly 20 members on the working group. The small size of CIEQ is not unusual for business interest groups; the majority have fewer than fifty members (Moe, 1980). The total number of businesses, and therefore members, has remained quite constant over the last three to four years and yet the individual participants have had a relatively high degree of turnover. This is in part due to natural processes but also heavily influenced by corporate restructuring and down-sizing. Only two of the original corporate CEOs remain involved, and only 2 of the working group participants are original members. Despite the turnover, and likely a result of it, the leaders for both the CEO group and the working group are original members. At the time of the interviews (October, 1995 through March, 1996), CIEQ had 13 member organizations: 11 businesses, the state Chamber of Commerce, and the university.

Research Question #1 - How and why has this group of business leaders joined together to form CIEQ?

The formation of an organization such as CIEQ can be viewed as a natural and likely occurrence (Truman, 1951), an unlikely and irrational activity unless sufficient rewards and benefits are offered to potential members (Olson, 1965), an outgrowth of highly interested and committed leaders (Sabatier, 1992), or an attempt to fill a void in the policy debate (McFarland, 1992). In this study of a single interest group, we find data to support each of these widely held views of interest group formation.

Order and Disturbance. We find broad support for Truman's theory that groups naturally coalesce around a common issue or problem through the natural interaction of individuals. It is clear that the BRT affiliation provided a "natural tie in" or "fit" in which these business leaders joined together in such an effort, particularly when the corporations had previous and ongoing activities dealing with education and schools. One CIEQ member, whose corporation had a long history of involvement with the BRT and in education stated: "I don't think there was ever a question of whether we would be involved" (177).

In addition to individuals interacting with each other, Truman also believed that groups formed around a common issue. Clearly, in the case of CIEQ the issue was education and education reform. As one participant stated:

> We had long advocated education reform quality improvements, had spent a lot of time in the legislative process on those issues and it seemed like *a natural coalition* kind of an effort that we could and should be involved in. 928 (emphasis added)

Another individual, having worked on their company's previous local level education initiatives, stated that "it made sense for me to get involved [in CIEQ]" (177). In addition to the members' (and corporations') inherent interest in education, there was also the concern that if a company chose not be get involved in CIEQ they would be perceived as being against education improvement. This perception held not only for the potential members, but for others outside the organization. Soon after its inception, CIEQ worked to establish a relationship with and garner support from the governor. This process of reaching out to the governor is clearly articulated by an original member:

> [Education] was a fairly popular issue whether you strongly believed in it or didn't strongly believe in it, ... who could possibly be against apple pie, motherhood and education. So [the governor] said he welcomed the business community into this.

While there is some evidence that the issue of education and of education reform, by itself, induced individuals to join, there is additional support for Truman's idea of "societal disturbance." Often times the present educational system was viewed as a threat to the future of the nation's well-being, with the President, the National Governors Association, and the BRT fanning the flames. One CEO referred to the issue of education reform as the "great crisis faced by America in the late twentieth century" (663). Another member described the negative "social impact" resulting from the failure of the schools and that the "whole country was suffering" due to the high cost of incarcerating drop outs (288). A common theme was the perceived threat to the economic competitiveness of the United States. The world is "becoming smaller" said one concerned member, increasing the need for the country to better prepare its future workforce so that it can successfully compete in the new global market.

Many respondents spoke of the local efforts their companies have been involved in over the years, but viewed CIEQ as a mechanism for affecting broader change beyond the boundaries of their home communities. An example of this sentiment follows:

> So when we were given the opportunity to join [CIEQ], I guess it was just kind of an extension of saying let's get involved with something that goes beyond [our area] to bring about improvement and quality of secondary ed. Because the problem we're facing here in [our area] is by no means unique. I'm sure it's as bad or worse in other places, so it was kind of an outgrowth of that that led us to join. 332

Aware of the criticism that business is only serving its own interests in its quest for improved schooling, respondents commonly stated that while there may be a corporate benefit to improving schools, the real benefit is far beyond the corporate bottom-line. Most members stated that their

companies were still able to find qualified workers (albeit a far smaller percentage of applicants are qualified than before), but that an improved educational system will foster a "healthier society" with fewer "social pathologies" (1006).

By-product. While we found solid support for Truman's theory, we also found many comments related to maximizing one's personal and company's utility in joining CIEQ. Clearly, while many individuals have a personal interest in educational reform and view it as a national problem, they admit they joined CIEQ with the hope that they could impact schooling which would then in turn improve their future work force. Even those firms who presently have no difficulties finding quality workers, spoke of the need to have well educated customers (1006).

Olson's by-product theory assumes individuals are rational decisionmakers and that a decision to join is made after it is determined that sufficient rewards to the individual (or firm) will be garnered. As one non-CIEQ policymaker commented, "corporate leaders know full well that to have a good work force you got to have an educated work force" (906). There seems to be no doubt that business has much to gain from an improved educational system, and as such many business leaders and policymakers spoke directly to the necessity of their corporation becoming involved in educational reform. Some respondents were quite blunt in their interest in education reform: "The quality of the future work force is directly tied to our company's prosperity" (1068).

Time and time again CEOs and working group representatives spoke of the high cost of training and retraining their workers. One member described his company's hiring policies and how they have changed over the last two decades. After watching the number of qualified applicants "dwindle" to the point where there were not enough qualified applicants, "we reduced the requirements for the courses they took in high school" (288). But once the requirements were reduced, the "burden of teaching" the new hires "fell on us." Many working group members and some CEOs echoed this sentiment, one stating:

> They were not coming to us ready to work. We had to retrain and we were spending a lot of money retraining. We are still doing that and the pipeline is not full of workers that would meet our needs without having to be retrained...there should be some way for us to *use* the educational system so that people are more prepared. 390 (emphasis added)

However, while many participants were concerned about their own company's bottom line, there is also evidence to support Olson's idea that external benefits may result as a by-product once the self-serving goals are met. However, inherent in Olson's view was a temporal relationship between the benefit to the organization and the benefit to the external environment with the external agents benefiting only after the firm benefits. While our findings do not always support this temporal relationship, they do support the notion that interest groups can have self serving interests in addition to broader state or national interests in improving the educational system.

One member, in describing the motivation behind his company's involvement, stated they did not join for publicity or because it was fashionable, but rather because the actions of such groups are "beneficial" to the broader society. He continued that the outgrowth of CIEQ is a "win-win situation for everybody" (390). Another member described the "corporate citizenship reason" as a motivator for joining CIEQ. Much of the public relations work of his company is to demonstrate "corporate citizenship and corporate responsibility," concluding all corporate activity does not "add profit" to the corporation" (177). A representative from a more recently joining corporation (453) emphasized the importance of a quality educational system to the growth and maintenance of the nation's economy, upon which her company is dependent. Finally, one person's perception of his CEO's motivations encapsulates the interconnected relationship between broad collective benefits for society and the practical, selective incentives for an individual companies:

> From a philosophical and personal stand point [my CEO] knew he wanted to be involved in education and knew it was important, but also from a very practical business stand point it became imperative that business get involved. 1042

It is not only the CIEQ members that view the interest group as having a dual purpose. One respondent outside the purview of CIEQ offers the following:

> Obviously [member CEOs] felt that K-12 education was in some difficulty and it was beginning to pose very significant problems for their corporations and getting quality trained people that they needed. They were investing enormous...resources in remedial education and therefore they felt it was in a *national interest* and in their *corporate interest* if they could have an impact on K-12 they could have a more skilled work force, they could reduce costs.... 663 (emphasis added)

Similar to how the perceived societal disturbance drew some corporations into CIEQ (described above), the changing conditions on the shop floor also provided the impetus to draw firms into the interest group. We found substantial evidence of "dramatically" changing technologies in the manufacturing industries during the 1980's resulting in a new need for workers with computer and literacy skills that had previously not been needed on the shop floor (392, 453, 646). While in the process of "resizing" and bringing new technology to the assembly line, one company "discovered" they had an "awful lot of closet illiterates" on their workforce who were unable to do the newly required tasks (882). This member also stated that schools must improve so "that doesn't happen again." Technological changes in the 1980's, in a variety of industries, created a pool of experienced yet now unskilled workers unable to efficiently complete the job tasks. Where previously those same workers had sufficient skills for their jobs, the "tasks have changed." There was now a need, unlike anything American manufacturing had seen before, for large numbers of highly skilled workers for traditionally low-skill, manufacturing jobs (1042).

Similar to the newly "unskilled" experienced workers, many third and fourth generation plant workers could no longer get hired into the plant because they "could not read and write." The plant now required its new workers to have high skills because of the new technology, although job applicants "didn't think they needed [to be able to read and write] because their parents didn't" (1042). Two other CIEQ members reiterate the significance of the technological changes:

> ...products of the American education system were going to have to begin competing with kids from Europe, Japan and all over the world. And the real fear that these kids were not being prepared. At the same time during the late '80s and going into the early 90s, we began to see tremendous changes in the technology of manufacturing [our products] and how with that a real need to reflect on where our kids...are getting the education they need to address that technology. 392

> We used to...hire [new workers] by the thousands and it did not matter whether we had high school grads or not...We just took them on and the good ones stayed and the ones that couldn't make it got flushed out. Now...the nature of the work has changed greatly....The equipment that they are working on is a hell of a lot more sophisticated than it ever was...We are finding that we couldn't hire the way we have been hiring because the people coming in just didn't have skills and part of that was the reflection of what was happening or not happening in the school system. So we were spending lots of money on retrofitting folks we were hiring to bring them up in these basic skills. So our interest is rather not to spend the money after the fact, we would rather put our nickels ahead of the game and have them come out of the schools ready to work. 646

Exchange. Exchange theory of interest groups posits that organizations are formed by individuals who are willing to put forth the needed time and resources to start a group in return for

a leadership position. Salisbury called these individuals entrepreneurs. While the support for this is less substantial than for the previous two theories, there does seem to be evidence of entrepreneurial aspirations among the CEOs. One CEO expressed the sentiment to his working group representative that he wanted to eventually leave his position known as the "K-12 CEO" (392). A working group member said his CEO "wanted to take a leadership role at the national level" (679).

Commitment. In his study, Sabatier (1992) found strong support for commitment theory regarding interest group formation. Individuals, particularly the small group of founders and leaders, join interest groups based on a personal sense of commitment and mission to a given issue. We too find support for the formation aspect of commitment theory. Members at all levels of the corporations joined CIEQ with a strong personal conviction to improving the public education system. Often times there was a strong corporate commitment to education issues as well.

The commitment of most (but not all) corporate involvement with CIEQ began with the CEO. One CEO said that CIEQ was an "easy effort" to become involved in, both "from a corporate foundation as well as a personal standpoint"(367). Typifying the commitment of this CEO are the words of the CIEQ representative working for this CEO. The working group member recounts the day the CEO returned from the BRT meeting in Washington, DC in 1989:

> "We've got a challenge here," he said, "I think it's an excellent challenge. I've just made a ten year commitment for myself and our company to work toward with the governors on education reform." He said it's something "I really believe in" and "I'm going to really be committed to and I want us to be active participants and supporters of the initiative." 392

One member described his CEO's commitment to education as the "key factor" in the company's involvement (679). Another spoke of the CEO's interest and "advocacy in education over and beyond what he sees...our needs at the workplace" (646). Two CEOs came from immigrant families and attribute their success to their own education: "...without the process of education I would never have gotten where I've gotten" (596); "It was just inborn into him the importance of education and it carried on through his life" (288); "Education was paramount in [my CEO's] life...For him, education was a very personal issue" (1042). Another CEO was described as a "thoughtful community minded person" wanting to be involved in the community (392). One CEO stated his commitment for improving the education system:

> I know in my own experience what we really need it an enlightened society and we're not growing citizens that lend themselves to being part of an enlightened society. 853

Given the enormous demands on the CEOs' resources and time, it is not difficult to imagine that education reform could be overlooked or set aside by CEOs. One CEO describes how he gave the issue such a high priority.

> Well it would have been difficult had I not said, just a minute, managing the bottom line should take 50% of my time, if it doesn't the shareholders should replace me in a heartbeat. But that's *today's* bottom line. What are the issues that impact *tomorrow's* bottom line? Competitiveness, trade, environment, education, technology and corporate credibility. When I defined education as a *seminal* issue for the [my company's] future, that legitimized me spending as much time as I felt was necessary to try to seek an improved set of circumstances for education. 853 (emphasis added)

Perhaps a result of their CEOs' commitment to education, many CIEQ corporations have continuing programs with local schools or other education initiatives which show a degree of corporate commitment to education (231, 552). While the "overriding factor" is improving the

quality of the workforce, one of the leaders of CIEQ spoke about the "social issues" of which today's corporations are concerned. The corporate involvement in CIEQ "speaks volumes of today's business and industry with a social conscience" and how CIEQ views education as "critical to the welfare of this nation" (828).

Finally, the commitment of the working group members was crucial to CIEQ's formation. One CEO believed that, in general, the CEO's selected people for the working group "who had a serious and sincere interest in this to get the thing moving...[no one had] to push anybody into it" (288). A working group member stated succinctly the views of some of the members expressing the grass roots goals of improving student learning:

> We were concerned [before the formation of CIEQ] and we remain concerned about the academic achievement of children, K-12,... and our goal then and our goal now is to have impact on what goes on in classrooms. 1006

And, finally the viewpoint from one of the leaders of the working group:

> ... just a willingness and a vision on the part of those people who have been members of the working committee at one time or another to really commit themselves to doing this and none of them that I know of did it for personal gain. I don't see anybody out there looking to build their resume by being on the [CIEQ]. Everybody's been pretty sincere in their goal to improve education. 828

Countervailing Power. The theory of countervailing power states that individuals form and join interest groups in response to a well defined voice in the policy debate, or in the absence of alternative (or representative) voices (McFarland, 1992). Here, the central question is, did CIEQ form and did individuals join to fill a void in the debate over education reform as McFarland would expect? Certainly in the world of education policy and reform, there are several very powerful and vocal entities expressing dominant opinions (e.g., the teacher unions, state boards of education, governors). But did the business leaders join together in response to these dominant voices, attempting to speak for business throughout the state? Our data indicate strong opinions among the leaders that the voice of business was indeed absent from the debate.

One non-CIEQ individual, very familiar with the state education policy climate, describes the void that CIEQ fills:

> There seems to be no real group talking very much about this [accountability measures]. The governor is into choice and education organizations are into preserving what they have had. There needs to be a group that talks about management issues and how do you manage organizations called education institutions. 883

A leader of CIEQ, very familiar with state level issues, discussed the prevailing presence of opposition to "substantive reforms," but "felt that *by heightening awareness throughout the business community* in a cooperative effort with the BRT members it would enhance the possibilities for some real change in education" (928, emphasis added). He continued that they wanted a recognized forum for stating "what we need in business...[what] we need to make the...business machine hum" (928).

One advantage CIEQ brought to the education policy debate, as argued by a CEO, is that the group is "somewhat neutral" in policies it is advocating:

> We come only looking for a better product coming out of the system and to be sure that our young people across the state have as good of opportunity for a world class education as

> possible. We are not worried about our jobs, not our pay, not whether we are going to be re-elected. 367

While there would likely be debate as to how neutral CIEQ is in their views, there is not doubt that the education reform debate has been long conducted without the voice of business. This manifested itself in some frustration on the part of one member:

> [Education reform will] never happen unless there are partnerships and everyone is involved in supporting that effort. And it's not to think that we [business] need to be the watchdog of education but gosh darn it all I think it's unfair to think that education and the educators can move this agenda forward and continue without the input and involvement of the business community... and some process put in place that when changes are happening out in the business world that there are opportunities then to make those...changes within education. And so I don't think that can ever be accomplished if these kind of initiatives just go away. 392

But the inclusion of the voice of business in the debate is not without criticism. A non-CIEQ lobbyist argues that the voice of business is too narrow and parochial:

> They [CIEQ] advocate a position out to other businessmen that say the only purpose for education in [this state] is to produce workers for [the state's] business. That is a position that is not universally held by the citizens of the state, [or] by the consumers of education products in the State. 187

Research Question #2 - How did CIEQ select and set its agenda?

Once CIEQ formed, the setting of its agenda proved paramount to its survival and success. But how was the agenda set and who was responsible? Before presenting support for the various theoretical perspectives, it is important to note the involvement of the education consultants in influencing the agenda setting process.

In 1989, there was a lack of focus about what the CIEQ group wanted to accomplish and a lack of understanding of educational issues (e.g., school consolidation, school choice) among the original members. One member described these early meetings as "confused" (795). Most members of the group recognized the importance of a common, cohesive vision for what their group should advocate (231), but exactly what that mission should be underwent considerable debate. The lack of sound, reliable information handicapped the original members, a limitation of which they were well aware. Contributing to the lack of direction was that the original leadership did not have a formal agenda. From a more positive viewpoint, an active member stated that the lack of a pre-set agenda enabled the group to "decide [for themselves] which way to go" (1042).

Coinciding with the formation of CIEQ was the creation of a coalition of businesses and leading universities in the state dealing with issues of higher education. This higher education consortium happened to consist of many of the same business leaders (CEO's) involved with CIEQ. It was from these associations between a university president and the CEO's that CIEQ hired their education consultants. The initial contacts were between the university president, the dean of the school of education, and the CEOs. Once the consultants were brought into the CIEQ working group meetings, the agenda setting process began. A university representative recalls the early meetings:

> This was a long process, a lot of meetings. The corporate people...came to our initial discussions...with several different agenda possibilities. One and the most detailed and worked out was this document from the BRT...Basically they came to us wanting to know how to take these various educational reform initiatives and make sense of them in context of

> what was going on in [this state]...We spent a lot of time in these meetings going over what they were really interested in and then on the side of the academics what we thought was important. We went around on that a few times trying to elicit from them what they wanted and got to a point where it was clear that what would be most helpful for them is for us to say what we thought really needed to be done. 575

The consultants then wrote a document for CIEQ laying out a first iteration of what would eventually be the group's agenda and mission. This document was presented to the group and subsequently debated and revised for an entire year before the agenda was officially accepted and presented in a public forum. During this year of debate and revision, all members of the working group became educated in the importance and complexity of a variety of issues related to education reform. It is from this period of time forward that will form the crux of the analysis concerning how CIEQ established its formal agenda.

However, before we present this analysis, more needs to be said as to the preparation of the original draft. The education consultants saw two important issues that needed to be addressed in the agenda. First, the agenda for the group must be compelling on political grounds, and second, the agenda must be compelling on education grounds. As a university consultant observed:

> Their agenda would be compelling if they took a stand on saying they want, need, and value kids that learn more in school. That would be the kind of political position that corporate leaders could take and be credible, influential, and retain legitimacy [as opposed to] arguing for dismantling the public school system through the kind of radical choice system that was being talked about at that time or arguing for merely trying to break the unions and reduce costs. That is not of course how they were putting it, but that is how it could have been framed by political opponents. 575

This same member of the consulting team, most responsible for drafting the report, was cognizant of this dual purpose agenda. The consultant aimed to "simultaneously [fulfill] both the reform and political agenda for this group" (575). In doing this, the consultants served to "shift [CIEQ's] focus to some extent" toward what children learn, an issue not originally on the business leaders' list of interests. In addition, other items in the original report were framed to position CIEQ so that they could re-focus the ongoing state-level education policy debate:

> ...if the business people came out strongly supportive of these kinds of initiatives...it would be a real contribution to the political discussion in the state. Because the political discussion had been so focused on finance and choice, that if we could get the corporate folks to come out and say curriculum and assessment and preschool that would really be a major enrichment of the political dialogue. 575

In short, the consultants pared the issues in the initial draft of the agenda to seven main items, with several sub-items rounding out the agenda. Having laid out a first cut at CIEQ's agenda, the work of modifying, adapting, and adopting began in earnest for the members of the working group and their CEO's.

Order and Disturbance. Similar to our findings for group formation, we find evidence supporting several of the interest group theories. First, we report support for Truman's view that the agenda is set through a natural process of group consensus based around the common beliefs of the membership. While the decisionmaking process was not always a smooth one, the ultimate goal of improving the teaching and learning in schools prevailed. Original members of the working group spoke of the "good healthy debate" (332), the "natural process" (906), and how the members were "willing to compromise and give and take for the common good of all" (849). A consultant stated that there was "discussion, there were pieces of [the agenda] they wanted to put in or take out and there was a fair amount of revision that went on" (575). What was not debated was

the fundamental assumption that their work was to emphasize the teaching and learning that takes place in classrooms

At several points throughout the first few years alternative agendas were presented by members as well as alternative groups also working on education reform. A common response to the alternative agendas was that CIEQ cannot be all things to all people. The group focused on their set of issues, "stayed the course," and did not let themselves be distracted by alternative agendas (392, 288, 928). One current leader and a former member of CIEQ sum up the focus of the group:

> There's not a meeting or an event that we don't have that somebody doesn't raise the question "what does this mean for academic achievement of children" or "how does this change what's happening in the classroom between teachers and children." And so we've always had that measure...brought up at every occasion so that we don't wander off and start chasing and hearing the siren song...We're here, we've got a mission, we've got a goal and it's just a constant reminder. 828

> [The academic information and preparation in the original agenda] gave us all a grounding and we could always point back to it and say OK here's what we are about and these are the objectives that we set in the first place. Also when other things came up and other groups wanted us to take on their cause, we could use that as the benchmark and say, "Yes this fits in our plan or not." 1042

In short, the priorities laid out in the final version of the group's formal agenda proved to have "enough breadth that [they] encompassed enough of what each of the players coming to the table wanted to accomplish" (1042).

The degree to which the CEOs were in agreement is only marginally debated (most agreed there was broad consensus among CEOs), however there was a discrepancy as to how much the CEOs were involved and how much they actually understood. One CEO summed up the agenda of the CEO group: "I think everybody [the CEOs] conscientiously is behind the education process and wants to make it better" (596). However, a leading state policymaker provides a differing view of the role of the CEO's, one that hurt the progress of CIEQ:

> The people that [the CEOs] had representing them were the ones that were doing the worker bee kind of stuff. [They] know the stuff and...were really engaged with it. I think it was just more of a show and very little substance when you brought the CEOs together because they hadn't been thoroughly briefed, they hadn't been engaged, and the governor was able to use that occasion to simply trumpet whatever he wanted. 897

While not running counter to Truman's view of agenda setting, CIEQ did have some disagreement throughout the agenda setting process. Individuals (and firms) stated their opinions but when the majority of the group decided to disregard the opinion, the dissenting individuals withdrew their support and "took more of a back seat kind of role" (646; 231, 417). One member became particularly frustrated and eventually left CIEQ, although the corporation remained a member:

> I think that business is speaking out of both sides of its mouth on this issue. One of the basic tenants that...drives business is the free market system and the private enterprise doesn't like command and control systems...[Education is] not run like the private sector is run and it seemed to me that the private sector should be helping make the education community aware of the benefits of the market place and the fact that you can't mandate quality, but the market place drives quality. So, I got quite frustrated with what we were doing here in the...group

> because here we are, huge corporations that thrive in a free market environment and yet that is not the approach we took in education, as if somehow education was different. 231

In contrast to those members emphasizing an independent voice for business (see countervailing power), several CIEQ members advocated a broader inclusion of parties into the agenda setting process. The most frequently mentioned groups outside the business arena were teachers and school administrators (889) and the governor's office (596):

> We [CIEQ] just can't...say, "Business knows best." Business knows their [own] needs, but the educators are the ones that will have to facilitate that. So we have to work together. 390

CIEQ also reached out and attempted to foster relationships with the state department of education. In the opinion of a leader of the department, the department had an agenda with a "very strong and positive correlation" to the policy positions of CIEQ (897).

CIEQ leadership also played a role in the agenda setting process. The group leaders provided a structure for discussion, disagreement, and agreement. The leaders "really kept our nose to the grindstone and tried to keep us from getting too far afield. Because in an effort like this you can get scattered all over the landscape" (332).

By-Product. We found consistent evidence to support the notion that CIEQ set a formal agenda with personal gain in mind, as would be expected by Olson's theory. Although, much of this self-interest did not manifest itself until more recent years. Our findings may also be consistent with the notion that a successful external agenda for collective benefits can be stated and implemented as long as the members' selective benefits are satisfied. Below, we will discuss the degree to which members actually did benefit from the efforts of CIEQ, but until then we limit our discussion to the espoused agenda of CIEQ.

The evidence for personal gain points to three stated goals of several individuals. First, a desire on behalf of several of the corporations and CEOs to create a stronger working relationship, a tighter coupling with the executive office and legislature of the state government. This relationship was certainly viewed as important for reasons far beyond education and which are important to the future political positioning of the corporations. Second, a desire existed on the part of some CEOs to be recognized as a state and national leader in education reform. Third, some corporate members attempted to drive the agenda to ease their immediate business problems or quite possibly ease their conscience.

The desire to tighten the tie between CIEQ and the governor should not be surprising, given the initial charge that the BRT gave to the state coalitions of business leaders. The original intent, we remind the reader, was to create an alliance between the business leaders and the governors as they attempted to create improved state and local education policy. Structuring a relationship among business leaders and governors proved to be an attractive incentive for CEO activity: "Frankly the only way we got most of our CEOs to the CEO/Governor Meetings was that the governor was there" (177). However, this sort of CEO-governor involvement was also construed as harmful to the autonomy of CIEQ, as CIEQ's own agenda was at times overshadowed or even co-opted by the chief executive (177, 1068).

Quickly, the state level activity (with the governor and legislature) dominated the agenda of CIEQ, subsuming much of the local level activity. While this type of state-level legislative activity was pleasing to some, others called for greater local level action geared toward classrooms, teachers, and students. A leader of CIEQ explains the shift from local level to state level activity:

> Originally we had talked about having a good deal of focus on making program changes at the local level involving business people more in local education activity. In part, because of

> [CIEQ's] efforts and a changing attitude toward the need for greater [wide spread] improvements in education, a lot of the focus has had to be at the state level on public policy issues. That doesn't square with what we originally had hoped to do, but it is simply the reality of politics and the public opinion that we need to spend a lot of time with state level policy makers including those in the legislature, the department of education and of course the state board of education. 928

Finally, a key policy advisor outside of CIEQ described the group as becoming "intoxicated" by legislative activity, becoming "too concerned with being involved with the legislature" (102). In other words, rather than concerning themselves with policy implementation issues directly related to improved teaching and learning, the group got side-tracked by the glitz of law-making. This belief in the necessity to pass laws is clearly supported by a CEO: "We can sit around a room and talk about what's right and what's wrong and unless it's really decided upon and the decisions made and put into affect through legislation it won't work" (596).

The second source of evidence that group leaders used the agenda setting process for personal gain is the issue of CIEQ leadership wanting to be perceived in the broader state and national community of being a leader on the cutting edge of education reform. In describing one such leader, a working group member stated:

> He wanted results within a very quick time table. He wanted a guaranteed product so he could say as chair of the effort in [this state], "Here is what we have done and here is what we are going to do"...Maybe the biggest challenge was that there wasn't a consensus within the state group on what we should be pursuing, but the CEO who headed the initiative wanted something done and he wanted something done now. 231

Other members echoed the sentiment and said that the early agenda and leadership was dominated by one corporation, and "held it with a rather tight rein"(417), and "there was not a lot of flexibility... on the direction agendas took from meeting to meeting, year to year, and that was a frustration for us" (646).

The third source of evidence for setting the agenda to serve corporate self-interest involves a few of the companies which viewed CIEQ as a vehicle for "rectifying" the problem of retraining workers that they had previously laid off (1042). This caused a divide early on as to what was to be the mission of CIEQ. Namely, should CIEQ aim to improve the educational system for future generations or create programs to address immediate problems the companies were facing: "We had to keep pointing back to them and remind them that what we agreed to be involved in elementary education" (1042).

There was also a certain level of impatience and urgency to improve the system. This took the form of advocating the implementation of proven business improvement strategies (e.g., Total Quality Management) without spending valuable time educating themselves on educational issues:

> It was a little more reflective and took a more intellectual approach then I think what some of us really wanted to have in the beginning. Yes, we understood it was important to study what was going on, but what was happening in [this state's] schools couldn't wait ten years to study. We had to make incremental improvements now and that is part of what business brought to the table and I don't think we stepped up to the plate as well as we should have. 1042

In more recent years, maintaining the original agenda seemed to take a political turn. One original member was "definitely convinced" that the recent agenda has been unduly influenced by "political forces." Furthermore, the effort on the part of some members to "front" their CEO for certain issues "rather than dealing with overall educational reform" caused conflicting interests for

several members (882). In fronting their boss, these members were trying to advance the image and position of their CEO as state "leaders in education." Continuing, this member concluded: "I don't think we should stray from those goals for political purposes. Although we will" (882).

A central problem that arose from the perceived politicization of CIEQ's agenda was a direct loss of credibility in the eyes of many (836). What had originally given the group credibility in the eyes of educators and some policymakers was CIEQ's conviction to improve teaching and learning without regard to political or financial gain. However, once the group eased off its hard stance on its original priorities and was perceived to be playing political games, many people viewed CIEQ as just another self-serving interest. A leading educator in the state described the turn:

> When [CIEQ] tried to play political games by trying to sign on toward supporting the charter schools stuff that it lost it's thrust...They tried to play politics to assuage the governor as opposed to sustaining a good public policy agenda...It was as if all the work that it believed and it did for three years was now put aside and forgotten. And it looked as though it was simply a political jump to try and stay on the right side of the governor and much of the credibility, in my perspective and throughout the state, that [CIEQ] had built up had been lost. 897

A similar, though less critical, view came from another major player in the state policy debate:

> I was a little disappointed they weren't stronger on the academic end from what they have on paper...but that's a political judgment they made and they took a little softer position than I would have preferred. 906

Commitment. Despite the evidence for self-serving interests in setting their agenda, we also found that a substantial portion of the agenda setting debate focused on the members' commitment to the fundamental goals of CIEQ: improving the teaching and learning in schools.

In 1989 and 1990, as the original members worked to establish the mission and agenda for CIEQ, there is evidence to suggest a serious commitment on behalf of those sitting at the table. One active member described the commitment of many of the original working group:

> It came down to the majority of people who were sitting in those meetings in the early years were very committed to a cause and very committed to education and making difference. Everything was measured by how many kids is this going to help and how quickly? When we used those measurements it became a lot easier to see more clearly what the issues were. 1042

Another member recounts how a particular business leader and vocal advocate for quality education kept the group's agenda focused by repeating a simple question: "'But how's this or that going to improve the education of a child in the classroom?" A lot of times we fly a little to high, too theoretical. We have got to keep our eye on the worm's view" (177). Another sums up the focal point the organization, "It's all about kids and that's what it's about. And it's getting the kids prepared to get a good education, to get jobs, to live in our society, and to provide whatever they need and that's what [CIEQ] is all about" (392). A CIEQ leader reflects on the importance of the conviction of the early members: "If the members had not been deeply involved, CIEQ might have changed or softened its position on education reform...[Had they not been] willing to stick to their guns [CIEQ] could have been rolled and been a non-factor even after laws have been changed (849).

Finally, the view of a key state-level policy advisor sheds light on the efficacy of CIEQ's agenda, in particular the fundamental direction suggested by the consultants:

> Well I thought their first report...was a very good report. It was interesting to me because it didn't leap into the voucher fray or the charter school or choice fray. Which I often see people from the business community pay a lot of attention too. The [CIEQ] group seemed to have a very good grasp and I think had very good staff helping them. The elements of so called systemic reform to focus on a core curriculum and particularly to focus on the needs of children from low income households. And also the focus on what you might call compensatory early childhood education was very well advised too. 825

In more recent years, several respondents spoke to the continuing struggle to maintain the original agenda, particularly the emphasis on local level programs and issues. One discouraged former member wished the group would spend less time "around the table pontificating" and concerning itself with legislative initiatives, and more time getting their "hands dirty" by working closely with the schools in each company's local communities (646). One policy advisor outside CIEQ has a differing perspective on some of the CIEQ members and their agenda intentions: [CIEQ members] who have made an effort to get into the schools and talk with the teachers have a real interest in the work, and I think it shows" (825).

Finally, "staying the course" and moving the agenda forward is critical to the success of the organization. Without members committed to the cause of improving teaching and learning, the task of moving forward is very difficult. A CIEQ leader spoke of the necessity to be "vigilant" and not "stagnant" to maintain their public credibility (828). However, sometimes in the act of trying to remain current, or be on the cutting edge, the fundamental principles of a group are left behind. This leader is well aware of this dilemma: "I'd rather have the serious difficulty that we've been in as far as being wedded to our principles and not being ready to chase off after some more sexy kinds of initiatives" (828). CIEQ, through much debate and argument has remained focused on their original agenda items, often times sounding the cry, "re-focus the focus."

Countervailing Power. We find evidence to support the notion that CIEQ viewed itself as a countervailing power that filled a void in the policy debate on education reform. While we showed above how some members advocated a broader collaborative effort in setting the agenda, there is much evidence that at least part of the membership advocated an independent though missing voice in the policy debate.

Many respondents referred to CIEQ as working to represent the voice of business in the education reform debate, one stating, "[CIEQ] needs to stand up and say that's wrong" (849). Two members warned that in the face of alternative organizations and agendas, "We don't want to lose our identity," "We should have agreed to disagree on some issues"(643), and "[CIEQ] could really make a distinctive mark" (177). In trying to determine the "right agenda from a business standpoint to pursue," a former member described other constituencies, some very large, that he viewed as obstacles to the CIEQ's proper agenda (646). An original member believes that CIEQ tried to find a "niche" that "nobody else was doing" (882).

This view that CIEQ should be an independent voice is also supported by people outside of the CIEQ group. A non-CIEQ policy insider worried that CIEQ might be too close to the educators' view of reform, "[CIEQ] leadership doesn't need to clone the leadership in education" (102). Another non-CIEQ respondent discussed the need for a group such as CIEQ:

> Obviously there is room for improvement in terms of the advocacy and the independent voice that [CIEQ] can represent. I think that is an area that the [CIEQ] group wants to pay close attention to, to be an independent business voice. 889

Research Question #3 - How has CIEQ maintained and supplemented its membership and agenda?

With its agenda set, CIEQ began its efforts to reform public education. We now turn our attention to considering how the organization maintained its membership. Why did most members remain while some left? Why did nearly all of the corporations maintain their membership, despite high rates of internal turnover (among both working group members and CEOs)?

Order and Disturbance. In the case of CIEQ, as is true with most interest groups, the continued presence of a perceived social disturbance – the crisis in public education – and continuing interaction among participants helped preserve the organization (Truman, 1951).

Continuing concern for the educational system remained a rallying point for members. An officer of one CIEQ company considered the early years of the group as an information-gathering phase to determine those issues which "require ongoing attention." "I think the need is as substantive as ever," he noted (853). One CIEQ leader said he hoped to work himself "out of a job," but that much work needed to be done (828). A company official said the problem was not so much that the educational system was inadequate, rather that expectations for learning are necessarily higher: "The challenge is that there is so much more that needs to be learned and to be expected of our kids" (1006).

The regular interaction of members looms vitally important for the maintenance of the CIEQ. Several members commented that the cooperative nature of the group contributed to its preservation and successes (288, 828). CIEQ also offered its members the opportunity to interact with government and education officials throughout the state including the department of education and the governor's office (453, 825). The network created by the CIEQ enabled member companies to "feel like we can have our voice and be heard in the state through the [CIEQ]" (552).

Member turnover, particularly in small organizations can be lethal to the maintenance of an interest group. However, despite a high rate of CEO turnover (four of six) and a high rate within some of the member organizations, CIEQ grew to 12 companies while maintaining all but one of the original member corporations. A number of respondents, though, cited personnel turnover in the CIEQ as an obstacle to its success (392, 643). As one company official said, "It is a challenge to maintain continuity and commitments of the individuals on behalf of the companies that are represented in [the CIEQ] (928).

Important to providing continuity were the CIEQ consultants and the CIEQ staff. These persons filled the "need to have some full-time leadership" which has been the "major reason for the maintenance of the organization" (1006).

By-Product & Exchange. Few of the respondents cited the exchange of benefits for participation as the essential reasons for maintaining the organization. As one company's representative commented, "I think from a company stand point, its a matter of being more than just a good corporate citizen. There are benefits to be gained from the company's stand point" (390). Others noted, however, that if the tangible benefits to member companies were the reason for company participation, CIEQ could not survive. One company official said that on strict economic terms "there was no value for the kind of money we were being asked to front" (882). Community service by a company was an important motivation, "but the most important thing is it's tied so close to the economic survival of our country and the economic survival of kids going into the work place" (392).

Several respondents saw the participation of companies in the form of an exchange of benefits for participation. One explained that the CEOs of member firms participated in return for some sense that "they can make a difference" (367). Another said that several individual company representatives exchanged their support and participation in exchange for the opportunity "to make their own CEOs look good...so their guy could become the state's education guru" and develop a closer relationship with the governor (882)

Commitment. A number of respondents pointed to the commitment of the initial leadership of the group as vital to its maintenance. "The original people who got involved with [CIEQ] believed in it, had a passion for it, [and] were supported by their CEOs" (552). Several respondents pointed to the leadership of the first CEO to lead the group and the company staff he committed to the CIEQ (575, 727). But with four new CEOs of original companies one observer of education policy in the state noted that once the CEOs lost interest in the CIEQ the organization suffered.

Countervailing Power. The continuing need to provide an alternate voice in educational reform was important in preserving the organization as well. One company representative repeatedly stressed that CIEQ needed to continue to preserve its identity as a voice for business on education reform, even if this voice did not "coincide with the State Board of Education, the [Governor's Office], and [other state education groups]" (177). Another respondent saw the potential that the CIEQ's voice might conflict with the opinions of teachers and administrators in the state, and that this differing of opinions is important. (646).

Research Question #4 - Who has been the beneficiary of the formation and effort of CIEQ, and what benefits have been derived?

Based on our earlier discussion of Olson's (1965) distinction between selective incentives and collective benefit, we focus this final section on these two general categories of benefit, and in particular these questions: Did CIEQ provide a benefit for teachers and children in schools, to the broader society, or just to the members of CIEQ? In other words, did the work of CIEQ influence teaching and learning in classrooms, influence the policymaking debate, or did CIEQ members and member companies derive personal gain from their involvement in the interest group? Unfortunately, the five theories do not provide significant differentiation with regard to the benefit of interest group activity beyond the selective versus collective debate. For this reason we limit discussion in this final section to whether CIEQ served to the collective benefit of classrooms, to the collective benefit of the policymaking process, or to selective benefits for themselves.

Earlier we laid out a distinction between the espoused benefits and the realized benefits of CIEQ. Espoused benefits are those that the group desires, while realized benefits are those tangible benefits resulting from the previous actions of CIEQ. However, within the espoused benefits are three predominant themes: 1) improving teaching and learning, 2)becoming an active voice for business in the policy debate, and 3) improving CIEQ's member companies' future workforce (which of course includes reducing future retraining costs). Given these three streams of espoused benefit, we now discuss the parallel streams of realized benefit resulting from the actions of CIEQ.

We find little support for actual improvement in the teaching and learning in this state's schools. In fact, the lack of progress on this front has elicited much frustration and concern on the part of CIEQ members. One company representative summarized the frustration:

> So here we are six years later and what has changed? What really changed for the kids that are going through the school system? Yeah, we put our message out there and a lot of other people have different messages to go along with it...There is a level of frustration and not seeing some of the things come to fruition that we would of liked to seen. 646

Another respondent explained, "I am still disappointed and frustrated that I don't think we are changing and that we haven't changed *what goes on in the schools*." (1006; emphasis added).

However, we do find extensive support for the second stream of benefit -- adding to the policy debate on education reform. Members point to the presence of a common business voice in educational reform as an important benefit to the education policy process (231, 332). As one

CIEQ participant argues, "The fact that there is a business voice that is recognized now throughout the state...that alone, is significant" (177). "At least we've gone on the record as to what we stand for," explains another member, while a CEO points out, "The business community now has a presence in the discussions on education reform" (332, 928). Two other respondents point to the inherent collective benefit of raising awareness on education issues (231, 897).

Perspectives on the benefit of CIEQ are particularly important should they come from persons not affiliated with CIEQ. Policymakers outside of CIEQ have been quite positive in their opinions of the benefit derived from CIEQ, yet the benefit is focused on involving business in the education debate and raising awareness of important educational issues among business persons, educators, parents, and policymakers (187, 575). A former state education official said, "I think [CIEQ] -- number one -- raised the consciousness of the public that business indeed had a sustained and informed agenda for schools" (897). Finally, one observer very knowledgeable with regard to education policy noted:

> The key thing they have done is bring business leaders into the educational debate and I think that is an important thing... Certainly the education community is paying more attention to the business leaders now than they did previously...They have also helped with the public understanding of education issues." 883

Similar to the first stream of directly improving the instruction and learning in schools, we find little support that members of CIEQ have garnered any personal or corporate benefit from their CIEQ activities. No companies reported an improvement in the qualification of their new hires or a reduction in retraining costs. This is not surprising due to the relatively short time period since CIEQ began and the long-term goals of systemic reform. No CEO's or state government officials reported new found power or access on the part of the CEO's to the governor, or has it placed members in higher level positions within their corporations. The only tangible benefit we found for CIEQ members and companies are described by two corporate representatives. They saw their companies benefiting from becoming more informed on education issues and becoming more involved in the policy process (392, 332). According to one respondent, "We regard it as a success that our involvement in [CIEQ] has made us more knowledgeable and more active by far on educational issues than we ever were before we joined" (332).

Assessment and Conclusion

Our goals for this study were to better understand the formation and history of CIEQ, use five interest group theories to inform this study of a single interest group, and finally assess the efficacy of each of these theories. We now turn our attention the our third goal of assessing the relative strength of the five theories and return to Table 1 for guidance. Did any single theory stand out as most informative? Clearly, our findings suggest that no single theory is most appropriate or powerful, as we found strong support for several of the theories across the four questions.

The two main components of Truman's order and disturbance theory are the presence and importance of natural interaction among (potential) members and the presence of a perceived societal disturbance. The natural interaction component predicts that groups will naturally coalesce around a common issue of concern. In the case of CIEQ, each of the original members were also members of the BRT and each expressed an interest in education reform. In addition, the BRT and CIEQ leadership clearly articulated the "threat" to both the nation and business climate that the current educational system posed. As a result of this natural interaction and the perceived societal disturbance, individual persons and corporations joined CIEQ.

With regard to the agenda setting of CIEQ, we found evidence that the group engaged in a naturally occurring debate on the issues, consisting of argument, compromise, and eventually reaching consensus. Those members whose ideas were eventually excluded from the agenda,

faded into the background and eventually left the group. This withdrawal behavior is consistent with Truman's beliefs. Those members who remained with CIEQ did so because of the continued presence of the societal disturbance (total agreement that the problems with schools remain), their continued involvement with the BRT, and through the persistent stimulation by the group's leadership.

Truman believes the benefit of interest groups is widespread, not limited to the selective incentives of the group members. Our data on the realized benefit of the activity of CIEQ is wholly consistent with this common delineation of collective benefit. The addition of a business voice in the policy debate (at both the state and local level) is a benefit for the policymaking bodies and their constituencies. Whether individuals agree with the positions taken by CIEQ is another matter, but the fact that the policy discussion is informed by the efforts of this interest groups is valuable to the democratic process.

Turning to Olson, we also found evidence to support his claim that individuals act on behalf of their own self interest. In this case, CIEQ members often stated that their corporations were spending large amounts of money "retrofitting" their workers, and commonly believed that money and effort is better spent on earlier efforts at educating the future work-force, namely pre-K, primary, and secondary education. Apparently having compared the potential benefits to the current costs, each corporation chose to participate in CIEQ.

The agenda setting process of CIEQ was geared toward the long term rewards of systemic reform. Realizing that many 'silver-bullet' approaches advocated for reform are not good long-term solutions, the group focused on early childhood education on basic skills such as reading and writing along with stronger curriculum and assessment tools for the primary and secondary schools. Our evidence for Olson's claims is limited because of the long term nature of these agenda goals. Had the group set out an agenda composed of short term changes geared toward immediate results for the members of member businesses, then their actions would be perceived as working in their own self interest. We did not find this to be the case.

We found a similar situation for our question on maintenance of the interest group. Again, Olson states that members will continue their membership should they receive the benefits they are seeking. We find little evidence that any member, whether it be a working group representative or CEO, is receiving direct benefit for their continued membership. The one exception may be the CEOs' relationships with the governor (which could be beneficial to the CEOs in future policy debates). However, while we found support that some CEOs wanted to tighten the coupling with the executive office, we found no evidence of any member actually gaining from the improved contact.

We found limited evidence to support Salisbury's (1969) early view of exchange theory. Two of the CEOs expressed and interest in becoming the visible leader of the education reform movement (at least form the standpoint of business), however, neither of these garnered any tangible benefits in return for their leadership. With regard to what Sabatier (1992) referred to as "expanded exchange" theory, we found similar limitations to those expressed by Salisbury (1992). The current view of exchange theory is so inclusive that it is difficult to delineate it from other theories (e.g. commitment). While it states that entrepreneurs will exchange the necessary effort to form an interest group for adequate progress toward the realization of a desired policy or action, this becomes vague and difficult to categorize.

Commitment theory is well supported by our data. It is very clear that the vast majority of the members had a strong interest in the issue of education reform. While some attribute their conviction to personal experience, many spoke of their strong desire to see an improved society with fewer social ills. They viewed improved education as one solution to those ills and so involvement in a group with such a charge was desirable. The commitment, on behalf of the

members, also carried into the agenda setting process. This helps to account for the advocacy of long term, systemic, and equitable goals, rather than a quick fix to improve the bottom line for their company (it should be noted, however, that few members mentioned the likelihood that short term goals would necessarily benefit their corporation, resulting in a reduced attraction toward the "quick fix").

Maintenance of membership is less complicated for commitment theory than others (e.g., by-product). The key is maintaining individuals' commitment to the issue. Given the inherent interest on the part of the original membership this does not seem arduous. The difficulty for CIEQ came with the high rates of turnover among its membership. Again, while the corporate involvement was steady, the CEO and the working groups were saddled with steady turnover. There is some evidence that the new CEOs are less committed than their predecessors, which may have set a tone of reduced corporate commitment to the project. Had the corporate involvement diminished, however, we would expected greater corporate turnover (only two businesses left the group in its seven years). Off-setting the turnover, the new crop of representatives also exhibited high degrees of commitment to an improved educational system.

Finally, the theory of countervailing power is well supported by our findings. The formation, recruitment, and maintenance of the original membership and the establishment of the agenda all reflect a need and desire to insert the voice of business into the education policy arena. Both members and non-members alike viewed CIEQ as a valuable and necessary voice previously missing from the policy debate. Even though some policymakers disagreed with the CIEQ agenda they welcomed the group into the discussion. It is in this vein that the benefit of CIEQ is most evident.

Our case study of the Corporations for Improved Education Quality reveals that this interest group is a complex organization with complex individuals who joined and stayed for a variety of reasons. While we found at least limited support for each of the five theories, we found particularly strong support for Truman's order and disturbance, Sabatier's commitment, and McFarland's countervailing power. We conclude that none of the theories -- individually -- are able to fully describe or predict the formation, agenda setting, maintenance, or benefit of CIEQ. We doubt that individuals joined CIEQ simply because of a perceived societal disturbance, their commitment to the issue of education, or to fill a void in the policy debate. But rather, they likely joined, set their agenda, and maintained their membership through some combination of interests and needs. We believe that such actions are contingent upon the presence of a number of issues: the presence of a significant societal disturbance, a strong personal interest in the specific issue (which may include the desire for utility maximization), *and* the recognition that their voice is absent from the current debate. Had the individuals not been persuaded that the current educational system was failing to prepare future workers and citizens, had they a lesser interest in the issue of education reform, or had they believed that another organization was representing its interests in the policy debate, it is unlikely that they or their corporation would join, set the agenda they did, or subsequently maintain their membership.

To date, the benefit of the CIEQ is collective; it has informed and contributed to the public policy debate on education reform. As viewed by many members and non-members, this is a success. One prevalent concern about business involvement in issues such as education reform, has been that business seeks only solutions beneficial to its own interests. While this is consistent with Olson's view, we find little evidence of business benefiting from their own actions. Finally, some concerned members and non-CIEQ policy makers call for more CIEQ action at the local level; specifically actions that *directly* impact classrooms, teachers, and students. Whether this activity ever comes to fruition, only time will tell. But recently, one notable addition to the priorities of CIEQ is placed prominently on the cover of their latest document and may foreshadow a new emphasis for future years: "1996 Strategic Plan: Focus on the Local level."

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Table 1

Research Questions and Interest Group Theories

Questions	Theories				
	Order and Disturbance (Truman)	By-Product (Olson)	Modified Exchange (Salisbury, et. al.)	Commitment (Sabatier)	Countervailing Power (McFarland)
Formation? (Why individuals join)	Political: As a result of natural interaction and/or societal disturbance	Economic: To maximize personal utility. Some will also join for political motivations	Economic: To maximize personal utility in exchange of involvement and leadership	Political: To act on heightened personal interest in a particular issue	Political: To react to the dominant voice of well-organized interest groups
Agenda-Setting?	Naturally-forming based on common political views	Set as result of input from political members	Set by entrepreneurs and political members.	Set by the most committed members	Set in contrast to dominant groups
Maintenance?	Political: Reflects continued interaction and disturbance	Economic: Reflects benefits received; Political: Reflects economic and political benefits received	Economic: Reflects benefits received	Political: Involvement reflects degree of interest	Political: Reflects continued presence of issue and opposing influence
Benefits?	Collective	Selective; Collective: Only to the extent that members benefit	Selective and collective	Collective	Collective: Typically to a specific sector of society

Note. Adapted from Sabatier (1992), p. 111